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Press Release

USDA Announces Support for Mental Health Facilities in Rural Areas

Department sets goal of \$50 million investment as part of President Obama's effort to help improve access and treatment for mental health problems

WASHINGTON, Dec. 10, 2013 - Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has set a goal of investing up to \$50 million to increase access to mental health care in rural areas over the next three years. The funding will be used for the construction, expansion, or equipping of rural mental health facilities and will be provided through the Community Facilities direct loan program. USDA's effort to provide better mental health care in rural areas is part of President Obama's ongoing commitment to address mental illness.

"We need to be sure that every American has access to quality mental health services, including Americans living in rural areas," said Vilsack. "As part of the Obama Administration's effort to expand access to treatment for those suffering from mental health problems, USDA investments in mental health care facilities will reduce the difficulty many rural families face in accessing mental health help. These funds can also help expand and improve upon the services already offered by mental health facilities in rural communities, many of which increasingly are focused on helping military veterans."

Today's funding announcement builds on key steps the Administration has already taken to reduce the stigma associated with seeking help for mental illness, and to ensure that millions more individuals have health insurance that covers mental health and substance use disorder services at parity with medical and surgical benefits.

Ensuring rural Americans have access to quality health care is a top priority for USDA. This year, USDA invested more than \$649 million in 130 rural health care facilities - serving nearly 3.2 million rural residents. These investments included critical access hospitals, rural health clinics, psychiatric hospitals, mental health care facilities, group homes for people with disabilities, assisted living facilities, nursing homes, and vocation and medical rehabilitation facilities. USDA is also investing in innovative healthcare technologies such as telemedicine, to further expand access to health care services throughout rural America.

President Obama's plan for rural America has brought about historic investment and resulted in stronger rural communities. Under the President's leadership, these investments in housing, community facilities, businesses and infrastructure have empowered rural America to continue leading the way - strengthening America's economy, small towns and rural communities. USDA's investments in rural communities support the rural way of life that stands as the backbone of our American values.

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